

SOLIHULL COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY CENTRE

MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 8th APRIL 2019 AT THE BLOSSOMFIELD CAMPUS

PRESENT: John Bolt (Chair) Paul Large
John Callaghan (Principal) Lucy Lee
Badri Gargeshnari Sukhy Nijjar
Stevie Gray Geraldine Swanton
Mark Hayes (Staff Governor) Sally Tomlinson
Katie Higgins (Student) Matthew Warburton (Staff)
Barbara Hughes

IN ATTENDANCE: Lindsey Stewart (Deputy Principal)
Heather Evans (Vice Principal Finance)
Pete Haynes (Vice Principal HR and Student Services)
Beth Selwood (Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality)
Theresa Lynch (Clerk to the Corporation)

Adam Thomas – Director of Student Services (Student Presentation)

The Chair explained that the Stockford family had visited the College to plant a rose in the memorial garden and to see the Lena Stockford science block.

Student Executive Presentation and Discussion

Student Attendees:

- Student Voice President – Zoe Bullock, Level 2 Air Cabin Crew
- Women's Officer – Amy Bolton, Level 3 Animal Management
- Student Rep – Zahra Johnson, Level 3 Ext Diploma Health and Social Care
- Student Rep – Alishah Shinwari, Level 3 Ext Diploma Health and Social Care

Introductions were made

Governors asked the students questions about their experience at the College:

Women's Officer –

Q. Where do you do work experience and where do you live?

A. Blue Cross Animal Sanctuary in Bromsgrove. Live in [REDACTED] and it takes 2 hours to get to College. It was noted that the students also travelled from [REDACTED] and that a lot of students travel a long way for specialist courses at the College.

Q. Why did you choose Solihull College and University Centre?

A. Went to Halesowen College to do Health and Social Care, but did not settle. Visited Solihull College and really enjoyed it and it now exceeds expectations.

Q. What will you do when you finish college?

A. Hope to go to university and do zoology or animal behaviour and, thereafter, work in Africa with animals.

Q. What activities have you arranged as Women's Officer?

A. International Woman's Day in the Link and the Student Conference, which included a session about women being empowered.

President –

The President explained that she was undertaking an aviation and cabin crew course, that included 60 hours work experience in Spain through an arrangement the College has with an organisation there. She explained that understanding how processes at the airport work had given her increased confidence.

As President, the main focus for the year had been the Student Conference. The theme had been equality and diversity and feedback had been very good. The conference had exceeded students' expectations. She explained that students had been asked about the issues they would like covered in future. Feedback included a wish for more trips, a music course, information on knife crime and mental health and a sign language club so that students could feel more included in College life. She noted that a prom had also be requested.

Q. How did the Conference go?

A. It had been really good, with about 70 delegates. Students from Woodlands and Stratford campuses were invited and transport offered, however, only about 5 came.

Student Rep –

Explained that she had worked at a care home for work experience and this had helped her to decide that she would like to do nursing in the future. May do a science course at the College and get into haematology next year. She confirmed that her placement had given her a great experience to show what the job involves and contributed to qualification. Initial placements were arranged by the College, while second placements were chosen by students themselves, with support from placement officers, as appropriate. Placement officers are very supportive, visiting students on placement.

Q. Have you received good careers advice at the College?

A. Yes she had received career advice and good support to be able to choose her next course and future direction.

The students asked Governors questions:

Q. What do governors do?

A. Governors are volunteers who set the strategic direction of the College. They support and challenge managers relating to performance of the College both in terms of teaching and learning and financial outcomes. Governors meet regularly to discuss College business and hold meetings at each of the campuses throughout the year. They also visit classes to meet students and see teaching and learning in action. If the College has problems the Governors are held to account.

The Governors have a range of skills, experience and expertise so that they can discuss a wide range of matters including finance, curriculum etc in order to approve key decisions. The common and key interest for all is that students are well supported, are challenged to reach their targets and that any barriers are removed to ensure they can progress and succeed.

The students left the meeting.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Paul Assinder (External), Stan Baldwin, Angharad James (Student), Pat Knauff and Sue Strawford.

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2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no new declarations of interest.

3. **Minutes of the minutes of the meeting held on 11th February 2019**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th February 2019 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

3.1 Sub-contracting update: Phoenix Training Services (Midlands) Ltd change of ownership

The Deputy Principal presented the report and explained that the College had received notification that there had been a change of ownership at Phoenix Training Services (Midlands) Ltd. The contract with Phoenix is for 2018/19 only and would be reviewed through the tender process for contracts for 2019/20.

4. **Strategy Updates**

4.1 Institute of Technology Update

The Principal explained that a response had been received from the DfE who had confirmed that the College's stage two submission had been successful and could progress to the pre-award stage. The announcement was embargoed until Wednesday 10th April 2019. It was noted that the College was one of only 10-15 institutions across the country that had been awarded an IoT. The marketing plan, structures etc would now be reviewed.

Q. The IoT is in collaboration with UCB, Aston and other partners – will they have been notified too?

A. The College would share the information with them and go ahead with the meeting planned tomorrow with partners. It was noted that College was hoping to continue to lead on the project.

There would be a progress update in May 2019. **ACTION.**

4.2 T-Levels Update

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality provided an update on the current position regarding T Levels.

Q. Has the College received development funding for next year?

A. If a college has been successful getting capacity development funding this year, then they are entitled to receive it next year as long as monitoring returns are completed successfully in June. This capacity development fund (CDF) is to build capacity to secure and manage industry placements during the pilot years prior to the introduction of T levels.

Q. What kinds of employment areas has the College been able to secure industry placements in?

A. The College has had success in securing placements in computing, banking, hospitality, business and performing arts with the RSC.

Q. What is the prescribed pattern for the 45 days industry placement?

A. Generally the pattern has been 2 days a week, but some students have done block weeks. The timetable for 2019/20 is being planned to reflect the needs of employers in terms of embedding industry placement in to the curriculum.

4.3 Termly Update on 2018/19 Targets

The Deputy Principal presented the update report regarding targets for 2018/19.

Q. The outturn for learner numbers shows a large difference against expected outturn for 2018/19?

A. More recruitment is expected on small certificate programmes.

Discussion took place regarding apprenticeship income and it was noted that there was not currently enough non-levy allocation for April 2019 to March 2020 and that it may be necessary to revise targets if the allocation remains at this level. Further, it would be necessary to review how apprenticeships were dealt with in the merged College, as some issues at Stratford upon Avon needed to be addressed.

It was noted that attendance continued to be a challenge and it was anticipated that the 90% target was unlikely to be achieved. English and maths continued to be below required target, although there was some improvement.

The Deputy Principal confirmed that the National Achievement Rate Tables (NART) would be shared with the Corporation at the next meeting. **ACTION**. She noted that the College was in the top quartile in the country for level 3 achievement, with mainly sixth form colleges rated above.

5. Ofsted Monitoring Visit Feedback

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality presented the Ofsted feedback letter and outlined the outcomes for the 5 lines of enquiry.

- Extending quality improvement processes to Stratford – significant progress
- Governors' focus on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and progress of learners – reasonable progress
- Development of curriculum – significant progress
- Improving quality of teaching & learning by improving the quality of feedback, target-setting and in-class review of what learners understand – reasonable progress.
- Improving the quality of apprenticeships, through developing apprentices' skills and written work and providing helpful feedback – reasonable progress.

Discussion took place regarding the judgement relating to governance and it was noted that quality of teaching and learning and in-year learner progress needed to be reported and discussed regularly. The RAG rating on the QIP had been raised by the Inspector and it was noted that this would be reviewed and discussed with Governors in due course. **ACTION**.

It was noted that this had been a really good outcome and showed how Stratford upon Avon staff had embraced new systems and processes and thanks were expressed to them for their hard work and commitment in ensuring the merger was successful.

The Staff Governor from the Stratford campus explained that the year prior to merger had been difficult and it was fantastic to have moved so far forward in one year.

The Chair explained that the Chair, Vice Chair, Principal, Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality and the Clerk had met to discuss business planning for the Corporation for 2019/20. A further meeting would take place that would include the newly-appointed Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality and the Chair of Governors and the Chair-designate.

SCIF (Strategic College Improvement Fund) Grant – the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality explained that funding was available for RI (“Requires Improvement”) colleges and that Solihull College would be the improvement partner for Stratford. An application had been submitted, focussing on improvement of apprenticeships and quality of delivery.

6. Quality Improvement Plan 2018/19

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality presented the Quality Improvement Plan for 2018/19 and explained that underpinning the College QIP there was a QIP for each curriculum area ensuring a robust process.

Q. How confident are we that we have a very clear picture that shows the progress of all learners at all levels?

A. Very headline in the QIP, but there is more detailed information on the dashboard.

Q. Is there progress information that our teachers can see and use?

A. Yes, there is a progress dashboard – it is evolving and improving, but provides a tool for managers to review student progress at all times. Managers were very confident with the data available for monitoring progress performance.

7. Evaluation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Report

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality presented the report and showed information on the dashboard relating to:

Key Strengths -

- Learner Engagement
- Checking Learning/Assessment for Learning
- Development of Employability Skills
- Develop of Independent Learning
- Appropriate Support and Challenge for all learners

Areas for Improvement –

- Attendance
- Planning for learning
- Checking of Learning and Support and Challenge

Q. How are managers responding to not having observation grades?

A. The ungraded system has been in place for 3 years, although there was still the concept of pass/fail. The process is now much more qualitative and developmental and staff have responded well to it. The number of staff referred for coaching is similar to previous years. Some staff do ask for coaching and support and there is less of a stigma attached to having support now. Managers use a range of performance indicators including learner feedback, marked work, attendance, as well as the dashboard. This ensures a full conversation that really supports development and reflection on improvement, as appropriate.

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality explained that Check-ins were being

introduced so that managers could use Pro-observe to book a check-in with a member of staff. This would be an opportunity to use the dashboard to discuss progress, development plans and to affirm good practice, as well as address areas for improvement. This would feed into CPD plans.

The Staff Governors confirmed that the process was positive and that staff were more confident during the Ofsted visit because they were used to learning walks – the current process was more open and used a range of indicators for performance. It was creating a more developmental and trusting environment.

Q. How quickly is the information used to plan staff development?

A. Where staff are identified for needing support, this is done immediately to ensure support is in place. The information is being used to build a strategy for staff development for 2019/20. The Plan would be shared with Governors at a future meeting.

ACTION.

8. In-year Learner Progress Update

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality presented the report. It was noted that a learner progress report would be provided for Governors every term.

Stretch Target – Aspirational Target

The targets are produced in relation to the student's starting point, using ALPS (Level 3) and internal (Level 2) calculation to establish what can be achieved.

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality demonstrated the 2018/19 Progress Dashboard – showing course level data by student, including data for attendance, assessments and whether learners are working at their stretch targets and progress. Causes for concern about attendance, behaviour and disciplinary actions are stated. All the information is made available for the team to ensure students are being monitored and supported to ensure their best opportunity to succeed. A progress badge will show on their online ILP.

Q. What will affect the Progress Badge?

A. The progress badge will indicate metrics that show true individual learner progress, including indicators like work submission, grades, standard of work against target etc. An electronic process for monitoring the timely submission of work, marking and feeding back was being developed.

Note: QCF – internally assess. RQF – external exams.

RQF BTECS – it was noted that the near-pass means that students can still pass their overall qualification, as all units have to be passed. It recognises that the exam can be very difficult for some students. However, students often want to re-sit a near-pass to improve their grade.

English and Maths

It was noted that there had been an exponential rise in the number of students sitting English and maths at Solihull and a large increase at Stratford for maths. Further, it was noted that the National Average has reduced to Maths 15% and English 23%. The next Maths and English report would show Governors data for those students that move from a 3 to a pass – the College had good success with supporting students to improve their grades at the lower levels, even though this did not always represent a good pass at GCSE.

There was a change in the conditions of funding that would allow students that enter with grades 1 or 2, to do Functional Skills Level 2, however, there was an expectation that the content of the Functional Skills qualification would become more difficult.

Q. Are students that end with grades 1 and 2 often from disadvantaged backgrounds?

A. Often they are those students whose school history is not positive. Often it is the case for many of the young people that they experience circumstances that impact on their ability to study.

Apprenticeship Provision

The Principal explained that there was still some legacy issues that would impact on 2018/19, but then there should be a volume drop. There will be different patterns for apprenticeships in future years – end dates will be longer, so there will be a hiatus period. The outcomes for 2018/19 would be reported in the Autumn term 2019. **ACTION.**

9. Dashboard – Quality

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality presented the Quality section of the Governors' Dashboard.

10. VECTOR Data Presentation

The Deputy Principal presented the report.

Q. From the report it appears that there are 800 students in Stratford upon Avon that attend FE provision. There are 414 at Stratford upon Avon College, 20 at Solihull College and another 380 that go to Warwickshire College. Is there a way of encouraging more to come to Solihull and Stratford campuses?

A. The current year was a difficult recruitment year for SUAC. Applications for next year are increasing. It is hoped that some will come back to Stratford upon Avon. There were 76% more attendees at the Open Evening recently. It may take some time to increase confidence in the community following the poor press reputation in previous years. There are many events and activities taking place to attract local students. All staff are committed to get students back. It was noted that applications are higher at Solihull too.

Q. Do you work with schools in Stratford?

A. Work is done with local schools. Not so many level 2 students in Stratford, so many do go to sixth forms.

Q. Are there transport links?

A. If you live in rural Warwickshire you will have to travel to whichever college you choose. In Birmingham the issue is probably more about the costs of travelling. The railway station in Stratford means the College is well placed and close to the centre of the town for buses. Bursaries are available to provide support and are based on the student's circumstances, but possibly also for students living in areas difficult to travel from.

Q. Why would Governors trust that the numbers are increasing in Stratford?

A. In the past A levels tended to skew the conversion rates, so in the future estimating numbers should be more reliable because conversion rates will be less unpredictable. It is very important to build confidence, show investment and give assurance to prospective students.

11. Property Update Report

The Vice Principal Finance presented the report and explained that the Simon Digby land was due to be transferred to SMBC and that an overage agreement would be in place for protection for the College for 10 years. The College would exchange and complete simultaneously.

RESOLVED to confirm the approval of the Sale of Simon Digby land to SMBC for £135,000 exclusive of VAT and note the contents of the report.

Stratford upon Avon Campus – the Project Manager had been appointed and the College was in the process of appointing the project team. A timeline had been provided and it was hoped that the contract would be awarded in July 2019. There had been 9 initial expressions of interests. It was noted that an updated valuation would be provided for the car park in front of the campus. **ACTION**.

Barbara Hughes left the meeting for consideration of the Sanctuary Housing due to a previously declared conflict of interest.

Sanctuary Housing – the College was in the first stages of talks with a boarding school that want to move into Stratford and may wish to use the residences.

Tudor Grange House – it was noted that Octopus had a new partner and the College would be meeting with them to discuss on-going progress. An amended overage arrangement had been discussed with Octopus, however, declined by the College.

12. Tuition Fee Policies

The Vice Principal Finance presented the report and explained that no changes were suggested.

Q. The disclaimer suggests that the College can change arrangements at any time, which is contrary to consumer rights – is this correct?

A. The wording would be re-visited. **ACTION**.

RESOLVED to approve the Tuition Fee Policies, subject to amendment regarding the College's disclaimer statement.

13. PMR February 2019

The Vice Principal Finance presented the February 2019 PMR and explained that the Financial Plan would be presented to the July 2019 Corporation meeting.

14. Audit Committee meeting held on 11th March 2019

The Chair of the Audit Committee presented the minutes of the meeting held on 11th March 2019. It was suggested that substantial assurance for internal audit reports should be stated. The Carver Model was discussed and it was noted that it was working well but would be reviewed in due course.

The Vice Principal Finance confirmed that the covenant KPIS had been reviewed by the internal auditors, as requested by Governors, and these had been confirmed.

14.1 Governance Framework – High Level Review of Selected OfS Requirements

The contents of the Governance Framework – High Level Review of Selected OfS Requirements were noted.

14.2 Insolvency Regime Update

The contents of the insolvency regime update were noted.

14.3 Health and Safety Policy

Discussion took place regarding fire awareness training and it was noted that this was a rolling programme for staff to renew the training, so the data always showed a period of delay because people could not do the course until after the renewal date.

RESOLVED to approve the Health and Safety Policy.

15. Search and Governance Committee meeting held on 1st April 2019

The Chair of the Corporation presented the minutes of the meeting held on 1st April 2019.

It was noted that a Governors' peer appraisal process was suggested and the proposal was welcomed. It was suggested that this take place at a development session.

Governance structure – it was noted that this would be reviewed in due course. The numbers of Governors, following the successful merger would also be reviewed for the future. ACTION.

Governor DBS checks – it was confirmed that Governors should have enhanced DBS check and Ofsted would expect this. It was noted that some governors that have not completed the DBS check after a period of time, so Governors are asked to agree that there is a time limit

RESOLVED to approve the following appointments:

Amendment of Paul Assinder's appointment from external member of the Corporation to full member of the Corporation with immediate effect meaning his term of office will now change to a four year term ending in December 2023;

Appointment of Dr Peter Bebbington as an external member of the Corporation, for a one year term of office, in the first instance, from 1st May 2019 to 30th April 2020.

Appointment of Tony Lucas as an external member of the Audit Committee for a four year term of office with effect from 1st May 2019 to 30th April 2023.

RESOLVED to approve that the requirement be added to the Standing Orders that governors complete their appointment process within 3 months of their appointment date, particularly in relation to the DBS check. Failure to

complete the appointment process and to submit the DBS application will result in their appointment being suspended.

16. Bids and Projects Report

Confidential due to commerce sensitivity.

17. Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality Appointment

The staff and student governors left during consideration of the approval of the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality's salary.

The Chair explained that the Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum would be retiring on 31st August 2019. The appointment process had taken place. There had been 20 applications and 4 people had been shortlisted and interviewed on 5th April 2019. A range of activities had been provided in the morning and 2 candidates went through for panel interview in the afternoon. The panel had included John Bolt, John Callaghan, Barbara Hughes, Sally Tomlinson and Lindsey Stewart (non-voting).

RESOLVED to the appointment of Rebecca Gater, with effect from 1st September 2019 and salary of see *confidential minute*.

18. ESFA Financial Health Letter and Dashboard dated March 2019

The contents of the ESFA Financial Health Letter and Dashboard dated March 2019 were noted.

Staffing costs were discussed in terms of predictions identified in the dashboard.

19. Regular Update Reports

19.1 Use of the College Seal and Chair's Signature

The contents of the Use of the College Seal and Chair's Signature were noted.

19.2 Tender Update Report

The contents of the Tender Update Report were noted.

19.3 Gifts and Hospitality Register

The contents of the Gifts and Hospitality Register were noted.

20. Date of Future Meetings

The date of the next meeting will be 20th May 2019, starting at 5.30pm at the Stratford upon Avon campus.

Signed: J. R. Bolt

Date: 20 May 2019
8.25pm

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JRB,